On seeing this couple, almost in a state of stark nakedness, seated on a bench among the cylinders and pistons of the engine, motionless for hours, we were necessarily reminded of the earthly paradise.

When among strangers the women are quiet and impassive, but when left to themselves they are full of fun and as playful as children. And this is generally the Indians' character.

The women take up a somewhat strange posture with their hands when they are standing. As they have no pockets to put them in, or fan with which to occupy them, or what have you, they place them upon their breasts which serve as supports for their arms which together rest upon them.

It would seem that such a habit would enlarge the breasts, but this is not so. The breasts are broad, it is true, but short and erect while the women are young. After expertae viruin, and having given suck to one or more children, the breasts shrivel and retract in a very unaesthetic manner, to tell the truth. It is to be noted that both men and women age early there, and also die early, and to this must be attributed the fact that there are few gray hairs even when there are faces and bodies so wrinkled as to make one believe that their owners must be as old as Methuselah.

I have gone into some detail in this matter of the breasts because it is known that in other regions, according to what is said, the women, when they give suck, give the nipple over the shoulder to the child which they are carrying on their backs. The fact is that no such thing occurs here.

The women, along with the men, have abundant, coarse, straight hair. They wear it rather long but not as long as they might, for it is shortened by wearing it in an unkempt fashion (which serves them as protection for eyes and forehead against the sun) and also by cutting.

They cut their hair, that on their faces as well as that on their scalps, with the jaw of a fish called palometa, which is armed with extraordinarily sharp teeth placed in two rows. The upper teeth dovetail exactly with the lower.

The palometa, the raya (ray--Translator) and the yacaré (alligator--Translator) are the scourge of those who bathe in this river and the lakes or pools which are fed by it. The palometa snaps, tears

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out chunks of flesh, and can even [180] be of some slim service, similar to that which is told concerning that fellow in the "Ricciardetto." It is an ovoid, laterally flattened fish. The ray is round, vertically flattened and has three barbs on its tail. It can make a very painful and dangerous wound with the middle barb when the fish is stepped on and lashes out with its tail. Some grow to be over a meter in diameter. It lies on the bottom of quiet pools, as close as it can to the bank; it would seem to be viviparous. The yacaré, a kind of crocodile, will without warning bite the leg or arm of an unfortunate father, drag him to the bottom and there devour him.

So it is that bathing, which was so necessary to cool ourselves off in the suffocating heat, was always embittered by the presence of these maneaters.

The married woman is faithful to her husband by inclination, education and fear. There are tales of terrible revenges wreaked by husbands upon their unfaithful wives, over whom they have power of life and death. While they are single they can be and often are free in their ways. It cannot be doubted that the whites attract their interest, if matters of racial difference do not intervene, for the poorest white is always in a position to give better presents than is the richest chief.

These women love decorations and clothing, but have no use for skirts or corsets. They wrap themselves from the waist down in a blanket, and hold it up with a belt or cord which is hidden behind the fold of cloth. In addition to this they know how to distribute these rags in such a way as to accentuate their good figure and yet at the same time not encumber themselves, a skill not to be expected on first seeing them. Their dress consists of robes, and when they have any they put them all on, be it winter or summer, partly because of the nomadic existence they lead and partly because they like to do so. One might say that the saying: what wards off cold also wards off heat, is particularly applicable to them.

Both men and women love bright colors (particularly red) and variety, but they also like white cloth. When they put on any garment they always do so in such a way as to leave one arm free. The women have a high regard for the kind of shirts which we wear.

The women make their own ornaments out of leather and broken shells, achieving a certain elegance of form, though with a greater or lesser degree of rusticity. They wear, from childhood, a sort of

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132 tains the rivers may at that time rise to a height of twenty feet above the normal, and in low-lying tracts inundations are by no means uncommon. The temperature may then frequently rise to 110° F. in the shade. The forests abound in algaroba and other wild fruits, and the natives devote themselves to the cultivation of their modest fields of pumpkin, water melon, manioc, and maize. But at the end of March a remarkable change is noticeable. The thunderstorms accompanied by showers of rain, which during the summer time are comparatively frequent, cease from then on, and a season of drought which lasts for several months sets in. Whereas in the summer the hot north wind is prevalent, the cold south wind is the rule during the dry season, and is one of the causes of the remarkable fall of temperature then taking place. In the early hours of the morning it may fall below freezing point, and the traveller who has spent the night in his open tent may, to his astonishment, find the water pools covered with a thin layer of ice. But about noon the temperature may again, if the sun shines, rise to an almost summerlike warmth.

●136 Animal life in the Chaco is much the same as in tropical South America, but shows certain characteristic forms. In the pampas regions large flocks of the South American ostrich (*Rhea americana*) are frequently seen, rapidly taking flight at the approach of a party of equestrians. The Indians eagerly hunt this shy bird both on account of its flesh, which is highly appreciated as food, and its feathers which are used as ornaments on festival occasions. On the edge of forests large troops of peccaries (*Dicotyles labiatus* and *D. torquatus*) as well as deer are frequently encountered, whereas marshy regions are haunted by the tapir (*Tapirus americanus*). Occasionally a specimen of the great ant-eater (*Myrmecophaga jubata*) is seen: including the long, bushy tail this peculiar animal measures about seven feet; the snout is very long and pointed and on the back it has a bristly mane; the forefeet are strongly developed and provided with terrible claws with which the animal tears up the belly of its assailant. Next to the jaguar, the ant-eater is the most dangerous animal in the Chaco, and the Indians allege that it is a match even for this beast.

Of the carnivora the jaguar is the most important; it is fairly common especially in the cattle districts and attains here a larger size than in any other part of South America. The animal is rarely seen, but its tracks are often encountered on the path of the forest, and at night its howling is often heard as it roams about looking for prey. The traveller

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must then be on the alert and have his horses and mules well secured. 136
The settlers generally hunt the jaguar by means of hounds, of which of course a great number must be used. Badly attacked by its assailants, the beast at last seeks refuge in climbing a tree, where it is generally easily shot.

The natives stand in great fear of the jaguar, looking upon it as the 125
incarnation of an evil spirit, and the beast does in fact seem to have far less respect for the Indian than for a white man. In the religion and mythology of the Chaco Indians the jaguar plays an important part.

The puma is rare, and the same may be said of the maned wolf (*Canis* 136
jubatus) which is reported to exist in the Chaco, for I never saw or heard of any. The fox is very common on the plains, and its howling or barking is one of the characteristic sounds interrupting the silence of night. Of birds there is no great variety in the Chaco. Doves, wild turkeys, and small parrots are, in addition to ostriches, the birds most commonly seen in the pampas regions and forests. Only at the big lagoons, found here and there in the interior of the country, may one notice a rich bird-life, especially during the dry season. Ducks of different kinds, white and yellow herons, storks, and other aquatic birds in countless numbers give life to these places, whither also many animals of the forest descend to allay their thirst.

Venomous snakes, even rattlesnakes, are quite common on the plains, especially during the dry season. Both in the river Pilcomayo and in the lagoons alligators are found, although in the Argentine and Bolivian Chaco they are not as numerous as in the Rio Paraguay. The rivers moreover abound in fish, and all the Pilcomayo tribes live mainly by fishing.

Insect-life is very rich in summer-time. Different kinds of mosquitoes, crickets, large beetles, and especially the *Cicada* with its shrill whistling, shortly before sunset and at night fill the air with their weird sounds, innumerable croaking frogs joining in the concert. These manifestations of lower animal life, as they are perceived at sunset, are, I believe, the things that most impress a traveller in the Chaco.

Although mosquitoes are numerous and troublesome in the summer, the climate is on the whole healthy. Malarial fever does not occur, except [64]
when it is occasionally introduced by settlers or other white men. Rheumatism and catarrhs are the ailments from which the natives most commonly suffer.

The scarcity of water has been the greatest obstacle to the explora- 133
tion of the Chaco. In the Bolivian Chaco the traveller preferably keeps to